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SUBJECT: SAAKASHVILI: LOWER PARTIES' PARLIAMENTARY
THRESHOLD TO 5 PERCENT

REF: A. TBILISI 2030

[1](#)B. TBILISI 2574

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: On October 16, in a televised meeting with parliamentarians from the ruling National Movement (UNM), President Saakashvili publicly addressed details of the upcoming elections for the first time. The President called for initiatives to reduce the party list threshold from 7 percent to 5 percent (ref A), to extend Parliament's term from 4 years to 5 so it matches the President's term in office, and to reduce the President's power to dismiss Parliament. He said these changes would meet the necessity for development of the country's political culture. Saakashvili said lowering the threshold would create a stronger opposition, which would be a token of a strong democracy. Saakashvili said the current opposition was weak. He also referred to recent developments in Georgia and said that attempts were taken by tycoons (e.g. Badri Patarkatsishvili) to influence politics as it has been done in Russia (ref B). Saakashvili said these "elements inserted by Russia" would not prevail. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) On October 16, the President put forward initiatives to reduce the party list threshold from 7 percent to 5 percent and to reduce "to a certain extent" the President's power to dismiss Parliament. He said such moves are necessary to "create a stronger political opposition in the country." Saakashvili also suggested the UNM pass a constitutional amendment to extend Parliament's term from 4 years to 5, in order to hold Presidential and Parliamentary elections together on a permanent basis. He said this "would allow Georgia to hold Presidential and Parliamentary elections simultaneously and thus save funds and prevent excessive political tensions." Saakashvili said a stronger opposition would be a token of a strong democracy and would encourage the further development of political culture in the country.

[1](#)3. (U) Saakashvili said the current opposition is "incapable of competing with the administration." The President then referred to recent political developments in Georgia (ref B) and said that attempts were made by "tycoons" to influence the administration as has been done in Russia. Saakashvili said "Georgia is not part of the Russian empire anymore and elements inserted by Russia will not prevail."

[1](#)4. (U) Note: Parliament is currently working with the OSCE and COE on updating and consolidating the election code. Three items bear the brunt of the opposition's criticism of the proposed election system (ref A): 1) the party list threshold of 7 percent, 2) the composition of the Central Election Commission (CEC), and 3) the "winner-take-all" system for the 50 majoritarian seats. The party list threshold was originally 5 percent prior to the Rose Revolution in 2003. Saakashvili did not specify how he might

reduce the President's power to dissolve Parliament. End
note.
TEFFT